

THE HYGIENE OF CHOLERA.

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS

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I thank you very cordially for your courtesy in asking me to say something; and as a member of the corps which has to do with these floating habitations which have invariably the reputation of bringing this disease and carrying it about the world, I cannot refuse to say something; but after the very interesting talk of my friend Colonel Sternberg, I feel that there is very little left for me to say. The occasion that brings us together just now is not actually the presence of an epidemic, but of its attendant cause, because all epidemics have a phobic *alter ego*, and we have now amongst us really not cholera, but cholera-phobia; it kills in an aggravated form, but in a mild form I do not know that it is altogether to be regretted. I recently learned from the members of the executive committee of what used to be called the National Conference of State Boards of Health, but which in the last year is now known as the International Conference of State Boards and Provincial Boards, not only the United States, but Canada and Mexico—I learned from them that it was the desire and intention of the State Boards of Health of this country and Canada and Mexico that there should be such a department of public health in the United States, which could unify them, unite them together, co-operate with them, and in time of emergency like this could direct them, could authorize them to do, could tell them what ought to be done. Now a national board of health, or department of health, or a bureau of the public health, whatever you call it, is absolutely useless unless it is an efficient one; and how can it be an efficient one unless it has all the means and money and men that it requires?

The mistake that health-men make everywhere is in tacitly acquiescing in the poor little sum doled out to them, and tacitly acquiescing in that the nation becomes imbued with the idea that that little is enough, and I believe health boards and health officers would do better by refusing to do anything unless they had the means they ought to have. A national board of health with \$5000, or \$10,000, or \$20,000 is no earthly good. It must have the proper power to use \$100,000 or \$200,000 if necessary. Now if we had a national department of the public health, foreign nations would know what to expect of us. The first absolute necessity of dealing with cases like this is to take the well off the ship as soon as possible, and not to shut them up and keep them there. Such a practice is indefensible, it